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THE WOODS!

HALF a century ago there prevailed an extraordinary mania in Scotland for planting trees. The general bareness of the country, the want of shelter for newly-broken up lands, and the desire for ornamenting estates, offered a sufficient reason for going largely into arboriculture. But other causes conspired. Foreign timber was heavily taxed, and wood of even ordinary kinds was enormously expensive. Wood, therefore, as a growing crop, was believed to be one of the best sources of revenue to landed proprietors. Whether for these or other reasons, planting was carried prodigious lengths in various parts of the country, vastly to the improvement of the climate, and also of general amenity.

Considerable success in a commercial sense, as is well known, attended the efforts of the Duke of Athol and other great planters in the north; and this very success led to still wider enterprises. Thirty years ago—twenty years ago—planting was taken up by the lesser proprietors as a species of duty. It was the fashion to plant, and everybody planted. No sooner did a gentleman purchase an estate than he made arrangements with nurserymen to plant his hill sides, and these were in time duly laid out with fantastically-shaped clumps and belts of trees. Sir Walter Scott, on purchasing Abbotsford, went strongly into this craze for planting; and on various occasions in his writings—more particularly in an article in the 'Quarterly Review'—recommended every man who had the means and opportunity to set trees a-growing on his property. The result, we again say, is a great addition to the beauty of the country. Scotland has been made quite another thing by the operations of its gentlemen planters. We thank them for what they have done, and hope that their example will be followed in such situations as still stand in need of shelter and decoration.

While, however, commending the generally disinterested efforts of planters, the time seems to have come when it may be inquired how their enterprises are likely to prove profitable. One thing we distinctly admit: shelter from plantations has greatly advanced agriculture; and where this is the case a good and proper end has been gained. Beauty, also, is worth not a little. But beyond these two elements there is reason to believe that plantations in many situations will turn out a dead loss and cruel disappointment. In an excellent practical treatise on planting,* the author, a planter by profession, goes into some lengthy

statements to prove that trees, on a calculation of sixty or a hundred years, will be an infinitely more profitable crop than anything else, supposing that the land, for ordinary purposes, is worth only ten shillings an acre per annum. He mentions that in one place an acre of land produced L.144 in sixty years from trees, while it would have given only L.30 by renting it to a farmer. And so on with various other calculations. It does not escape the notice of this clever planter that the value of wood varies according as the locality may or may not be conveniently situated as regards a ready market for the sale of timber. But a leading and serious defect in his production consists in a want of deliberate advice on this important point. Some little acquaintanceship with trees in the way of property induces us to supply that species of admonition which the work in question, like most other treatises on planting, has unfortunately omitted.

In reading accounts of Canada and other uncleared parts of America, one is apt to be not a little surprised at the valuelessness of the growing timber. Forests of the finest tall trees are spoken of as a general nuisance. Magnificent trees which in this country we should look upon with respect, are viewed with detestation by settlers, and are felled, dragged together in heaps, and burned. The land, in fact, is not of any value till the timber is got rid of. In these extensive transatlantic regions trees are for the most part only of use for firewood, or for limited local purposes. It may be doubted whether, if taken altogether, they are worth so much as a single farthing each. A tree four feet thick worth no more than a farthing! A similar worthlessness of timber is experienced in Norway and Sweden. Travellers in these countries speak of the finest large trees being obtainable for a penny to threepence each—trees which in London would probably be sold for three or four pounds. This worthlessness of timber in Canada and in Norway of course arises from the want of local demand corresponding to the supply, and also the high cost of transit to suitable foreign markets. Overplanting has placed various parts of Scotland in a position, as respects trees, analogous to Canada and Norway. In those districts traversed by railways, or which are in the vicinity of large towns or seaports, or that are the centre of mining operations, wood of smaller and larger growth can be disposed of pretty readily at paying prices; but in situations possessing neither of these advantages, trees of any size are barely worth the cost of cutting down. Larch, fir, ash, elm, oak—all are nearly alike useless—positive encumbrances of the soil. We shall, for example, take a forest situated at the distance of about thirty miles inland from a large town. In that length of road there are six toll-bars, and the

* The Forester. A Treatise on the Planting and Management of Trees. By James Brown, Arncliffe. Blackwood: 1851.

cartage of a load of timber occupying two days will be not less than twenty shillings—a sum double the freight of a ton of goods by sea from St Petersburg. Now, when to this expense of land-carriage are added all other charges—planting, rearing, fencing, thinning, and cutting, with rent of land for a series of years—a price per load is made up which cannot in the circumstances be realised. A few well-grown and peculiar trees may be made to pay; but we are speaking of hundreds of acres of trees, not small quantities of a highly-recommendable quality. In short, the landowner who has a forest on his hands, and is cut off from the world by half-a-dozen toll-bars, may almost as well have as much extent of bare rock so far as direct profit is concerned.

That facts of this nature are beginning to be painfully felt by the sons and grandsons of many great planters there can be little doubt. The hallucination of covering lands with an unsaleable article is in the course of explosion, much to the distress of families who had reckoned on a different result. To aggravate the hardship of extensive tree-owners, ploughs, harrows, and some other agricultural implements which were formerly made of native hardwood, are now constructed of iron; so that, in the situations to which we refer, an ash or elm tree, unless of vast age and size, is probably of no more worth than one of fir or larch. Larches of moderate size for what are called 'country purposes'—that is, for making palings or hurdles—are indeed the only things saleable, but at prices which it seems a burlesque to mention.

In the course of last summer it was our fortune to cut down and try to sell sixty thousand trees in order to thin certain woods. Larches, Scots firs, and oaks were those principally cut. All were about twenty-five years' growth, and generally they were about the thickness of a man's leg; some smaller, where they had been too crowded. The larches were cut and peeled by contract for 27s. per 1000, and the Scots firs were cut for 15s. per 1000. The cost of cutting the sixty thousand was £63, 3s.; and adding the charges for cartage, and all other expenses, the entire outlay was £79, 5s.

How to dispose of the great loads of trees that lay scattered about among the woods was now the difficulty. There the fallen timber lay; and as we looked at the unconscious heaps of trees that lately bloomed in all their leafy honours, we felt as if we had done a cruel thing. However, the question was now how to sell these murdered innocents. Our factor, a shrewd man of business—every laird, great and small, must have his factor—recommended an auction. 'Roup them,' said he; 'public competition is the thing.' Accordingly, on a day in June, a roup was called by means of bills on every kirk door within a sphere of ten miles; post letters were despatched to farmers; and in the nearest burgh town the roup was announced by tuck of drum. The great day came, and with it a crowd of some thirty to forty persons at an appointed place among the woods. As we advanced to the spot the scene that presented itself was picturesque and original. Men in gray plaids were seated on mossy banks talking gravely of country matters; here and there lay a shepherd with his dog; two or three rural carpenters were inspecting the lots; and the factor's clerk, with book and pen in hand, and an inkhorn at his buttonhole, stood ready for business. At our approach the auctioneer, a tall, aged carle, who had gone through hundreds of things of the kind, called out that the roup was going to begin; and to shew that time was up, he appealed confidently to a silver watch as thick as a moderate-sized turnip.

All gathered themselves slowly to their legs; two or three mouths interchanged stumpy tobacco-pipes, and several noses took snuff. There was a general screwing up to business. At this important crisis, the auctioneer

winked, as a signal for us to have a private word with him.

Speaking low: 'Have you got the whisky?' said he. 'What whisky?'

'Why the whisky for the drams to be sure! Unless each get a dram and a biscuit, nothing will be done!'

'Never heard of such a thing,' said we; 'the people come to buy wood, not to drink.'

'Well, well, do as you like,' replied the rustic Nestor; 'only I can tell you this, that unless they are primed they won't fire. Many of them want to buy, but they have not got their blood up; and unless they have a little spirits to warm them, they will hardly be brought to give a bode. I ken the lads doon hereaway fine.'

A pretty fix this! We must either make the people half-tipsy, or see the loads of timber remain undisposed of.

To cut the difficulty, the onus of the transaction was thrown on the factor. He might do as he liked. The factor judged it prudent to supply 'refreshment'; some of the audience had come ten miles, and were a good deal tired—it was such a warm day, &c. A gilly was despatched for a few bottles of spirits and a batch of biscuits. The intelligence, loudly announced, that refreshments were coming, acted like magic. The master of the ceremonies lifted his staff, which acted the part of a hammer; and the bidding began. A shilling for that lot—eighteenpence—two shillings. Here a pause.

'What are you waiting on now, gentlemen—go on!' said the auctioneer coaxingly.

'You have not told if there is to be any discount for ready money,' cried a voice briskly.

'Oh, I forgot that!' was responded. 'There is to be sixpence a pound discount for cash.'

There was a murmur of approbation, and half-a-crown was twice bidden. 'Going to be a brisk sale,' whispered the auctioneer to us encouragingly. One lot after another was knocked down; and if little money was going, there was no deficiency of jokes.

'Aih, Charlie, that's a capital lot; ye'll hae nae want o' parritch sticks.'

'I wadna wonder, Tam, but ye're gaun to set up as a grand timber-merchant; there will be nae speaking to ye.'

'Come, Sandie,' cried the auctioneer, 'here's a lot for you; what d'ye say—a shilling to begin with?'

Sandie mustered courage to bid a shilling.

'I'll gie ye a ha'penny mair,' said a smart little man.

'Houts,' said the auctioneer, laughing heartily, 'keep that for the brode* the morn. We canna take a bode under a penny!'

From heap to heap the company straggled on, ascending the hill, and pausing ever and anon to chat, laugh, snuff, and do a little in the way of purchasing. At length having come to a steep part of the road, which was cut roughly through the woods, a discussion broke out on a matter of serious concern. Amidst the murmur of voices that reached us through the trees, one was heard louder than the rest: 'I'll no buy another bawbee's worth unless you lend me the slype.'

'Weel, weel, Charlie,' replied the old auctioneer soothingly, 'ye'll get the slype, I've warrant. Where is he himself?'

Perceiving that we were in request, we made our appearance.

'Will ye lend the slype?'

'The slype!—what's the slype?'

'The slype!—no to ken the slype, and you have got such a gude ane too!'

'Then be so good as explain what it is.'

'Losh, sir, no to understand what a slype is!'

There were looks of extreme surprise all round. We

* Collecting-dish for the poor at the church door.

were evidently held to be very small for our ignorance of woodland affairs. The factor, as in duty bound, came to the rescue.

'The slype,' said he, 'is a kind of sledge for bringing timber down from high places on the hills, where a cart with wheels could not be taken.'

'But I do not know that I have a slype.'

'Yes, you have one, lying somewhere in the farm-offices: shall I promise the loan of it?'

'By all means.'

Pacified respecting the slype, the sale went on, and came to a finish when still a good way from the top of the hill.

'A capital day's work this, sir,' said the auctioneer as we walked home part of the way with him. 'The clerk tells me the sales will come to at least twenty pound, and a' as gude as paid!'

Thereabouts, certainly, was the sum-total. There were one hundred and seventeen lots disposed of, consisting, in the aggregate, of twenty-three thousand trees, cut and ready for putting on cart or slype. After paying all expenses, the auction hardly realised the outlay. But the history of the affair is not ended. Despite the strong temptation of sixpence per pound discount, many of the lots were never claimed. The sale took place in the middle of June, and at Christmas the snow fell on various unremoved masses of timber—a melancholy exhibition. Of course, there might have been legal prosecution. But who would worry himself about such a trifle? The result, one way and another, satisfied the sentiment. Any more sales of wood by auction was out of the question; and the remainder of the lots were disposed of privately, some in barter, and others for money. The creditor side of the account was considered by the neighbourhood as exceedingly favourable. It showed for sale of wood and bark L.104, 14s. 6d.; leaving a balance over outlay of L.25, 9s. 6d., besides a lot of trees retained for home use.

'You may think yourself well off,' said every one. 'A penny a piece is considered a good price for trees in this quarter; and if you clear the expense of cutting them down and removing them, it is reckoned a great matter.'

A great matter certainly! Our eyes were opened to the grandeur of arboriculture. As many trees as a horse could draw on a cart were sold for eighteenpence, though, to do the transaction justice, some cartloads brought as high as half-a-crown and three shillings. The whole affair was amusingly absurd, and presented a fine instance of the fiddle-faddery in which country gentlemen usually busy themselves. To see how far the joke might be carried, we invited a country carpenter, who wanted some good firs, to inspect a lot of upwards of forty years' growth. Capital tall sticks they were—not your thinnings. The offer which this judicious artisan made for them was—threepence to sixpence each. Had he cleared the two acres of land which they covered, we should probably have pocketed somewhere under thirty shillings. 'Why, you do not mean to say that threepence is all the worth of that tree?'

'Yes, I do,' replied the dealer in timber; 'there is little demand for wood of that kind here, and so much of it can be had that the prices going are a mere trifle.' Exit carpenter, and no sales.

Such are the experiences of a tree-owner, who should be glad to know what he is to do with a hundred and twenty acres of as 'fine thriving timber' as ever graced an advertisement, or formed the subject of eulogy of a reporter on plantations. There are the trees, green, beautiful, the embellishment of the landscape. Growing and growing, year by year they are seen adding to their bulk, towering on the hill-sides, and offering a choice of solitary walks, deliciously fragrant and cool in the summer heats. But how is the primary and

continued cost of these fine woods to be realised? Thirty miles from a market! Six toll-bars! No sophistry, no poetry can get over these hard truths. Far beyond the legitimate demands for shelter and ornament, these pleasant woods, the pride of the wild, are valueless—a miserable consequence of that imprudent taste for planting which a number of years ago knew no limit but the power of satisfying it.

THE BARONESS PAFFZ.

We found ourselves doomed to the unpleasant task of lodging-hunting at a peculiarly unpropitious season for those who desired to combine economy with comfort and respectability; the monster Exhibition having extended its influence even to the quiet, far-away regions of Bloomsbury. The notifications of 'Apartments to let' in the windows of houses in the almost grass-grown streets of that once-fashionable locality far exceeded any number within the memory of 'the oldest inhabitant,' evincing how the anticipations of a harvest of unusual profit, arising from the expected influx of visitors to the metropolis, had contagiously spread. In the course of our progress we turned down a short blind street, where the houses were few, of moderate size, and more cheering outward aspect than the larger and dingier mansions of the immediate neighbourhood. We singled out one whose windows looked bright and clean, and where the announcement of accommodation was displayed on a small card in very minute characters—so minute as scarcely to be decipherable, and causing us to hesitate before making application at the door with the usual question, 'Can we view the apartments?' However, our doubts were speedily dispersed by a neat young handmaiden, who replied to our timid summons with considerable alacrity, inviting us to walk in, and to walk up to the first floor. This we did, and found ourselves in what was of course denominated the drawing-room—and what a tale we read by scrutinising the contents of the room! I turned over these sad pages of reality, which interested me much, for I saw we were in the abode of faded gentility, and not in a regular lodging-house. There was scant antique furniture, preserved with the utmost care and scrupulous cleanliness; touching attempts at decoration and embellishment; fine muslin curtains, so exquisitely darned that the darning stood in the stead of embroidery; and all presided over by an air of poverty indescribable, which made one shiver and feel cold at the bare idea of becoming an inmate. Ancient annuals were arranged methodically on a far more ancient table, and in the midst stood a splendid china bowl, evidently the pride and glory of the house. It was indeed a beautiful thing, while a solitary card reposed in its depths; and shall I confess that we had the curiosity and impertinence to peep at this bit of pasteboard? It had been so often cleaned with India-rubber that the printing was beginning to be obliterated; but still fairly distinguishable were the letters which formed the words—'Sir Thomas Crumpton, Crumpton Court.'

I had just returned this honoured relic to its painted nest, when an individual rapidly entered the apartment, talking in an equally rapid, excited manner, without once stopping to take breath, and requesting us to step down to the dining-room, 'where aunt was, and also a fire.' The individual alluded to, whose quick motions we now followed down the stairs we had so lately ascended, was a small-sized female, apparently about fifty years of age. She had remarkably fine dark eyes; but otherwise the pinched, meagre, not to say starved expression of her countenance, was absolutely painful to contemplate. Her dress was formed after the obsolete mode, when waists were just under the arm-pits, and four breadths of silk were reckoned the allowance

for a full, handsome skirt! But her headgear—what words may describe that? What fashion, what country, what age, did it belong to? She wore no covering save her own hair—and but few gray ones were perceptible—but that was all braided on the crown of the head, to resemble a basket containing flowers—artificial flowers of foreign and antique manufacture. The flowers were faded; the dress was darned, like the curtains; the gloves were mended—oh! so well and beautifully mended!—and yet the little, odd lady looked like a gentlewoman, and we felt convinced was one to all intents and purposes. She chattered without ceasing in the easiest, most confidential way, and introduced us to her aunt as if we had been familiar acquaintances instead of strangers seeking for London lodgings. The aunt was twin-sister in appearance to the niece, notwithstanding a score or so of years' seniority; the dining-room was twin-ghost of the drawing-room, save that there was no china bowl; but to make up for the deficiency, a spinet—surely 'the first of the spinets'—stood in one corner: it was open, too, as if recently played upon; and a mere handful of coal smouldered in the brightly-polished grate, originally of moderate dimensions, but confined into a handbreadth space by false back and sides. 'They wanted society; we were the very parties they desired to have'—flattering and embarrassing to us—they had never let lodgings before—of that we felt sure—but seeing so many others put up bills, and people of high respectability, too, they thought that, just by way of a little variety, they, too, would try their luck at letting part of their house—a house they had occupied for nearly thirty years.' Aunt and niece spoke both at the same time; and to our half-uttered sentence: 'We fear the apartments will not suit us,' exclaimed in chorus: 'We shall be delighted to receive you; we do not doubt your giving us unexceptionable references; pray do not apologise.' And we had some difficulty in making the poor old souls comprehend that we must search farther before coming to a decision; but when they named an exorbitant sum for even handsome rooms in a good situation, and named it, too, as a nominal rent, in the simplicity of their hearts—for the sake of being beneath an unexceptionable roof, exchanging a rather mysterious glance, we thought it better to plead inability to meet it than to wound their feelings. But it would not do: they had taken a fancy to us, it was clear, and, for the sake of such pleasant company, would meet us in any way! Aunt and niece whispered together for a few moments; and then the elder lady, drawing herself up majestically, said, with an air of dignity and importance that was never surpassed: 'Sir Thomas Crumpton of Crumpton Court is a relative, though a distant one, of ours, and I am the Baroness Paffz; though, since I lost my husband thirty years ago, and left a magnificent west-end mansion to reside here and bring up my orphan niece, I have dropped my proper title, and am recognised by the humble and commonplace one distinguishing the mass, even as plain Mrs Paffz.'

We bowed to the baroness, and really endeavoured to throw all the respect we could into our demeanour, for we had no inclination to laugh, or to hold up to derision the antiquated gentlewomen, who took our respectability on trust, and so unintentionally flattered our self-respect by their perfect confidence. We could not get away from them—we must see the bedrooms. Alas! for winter weather with those shreds of blankets, curtains, and carpets! We must test the powers of the 'instrument,' once so famed. They doted on music, and it should always be at our command. Then they told us how they had lived here for thirty years—thirty long years—visiting no one, and being visited by nobody—(yes; Sir Thomas Crumpton had called upon them once!)—seeing no sights save the high wall opposite, over which the apple blossoms towered now,

but hadn't when they first came; never walking out save to church—they were bad walkers: no books, no papers; only this old spinet to enliven their solitary, monotonous lives. They never hinted at poverty or privation, though the baroness sighed when she spoke of former splendours. At length we made our escape, though only by promising to call again, and give our final answer, 'Which we do hope—oh, so much!—may be in the affirmative!' exclaimed both aunt and niece, as we warmly shook hands, and parted like old friends. The great wonder to us was, how they had ever brought their minds to let lodgings; but as our acquaintance ripened, the facts of the case became more fully divulged.

The Baroness Paffz, in the days of her prosperity, had undertaken, the sole charge of a destitute orphan nephew and niece, when she suddenly found herself a widow in reduced circumstances (the Baron Paffz held a diplomatic appointment, and lived up to his income.) Her nephew Desmond at that time was still at Harrow school. He was a high-spirited, handsome lad, equally the darling of his sister Clarissa and his fond aunt. Sir Thomas Crumpton was the only influential relative they had; but when reverse of circumstances overtook them, he looked coldly on those whose friendship he had formerly courted. However, he appropriated one of his freehold houses, at a low rent, for the use of the baroness and her niece: she would accept nothing more; nor was she aware, as we afterwards found, that twenty pounds a year were remitted by the niggardly baronet on the rent. He also article Desmond to a lawyer; and Desmond brought home every day to the blind, dull street his bright anticipations, and a spirit pining for freedom. Poor fellow! it could not last; he could not endure the confinement and monotony of such an existence, for he had been a pampered, spoiled boy, and promised by the deceased baron a commission in the Guards!

He at length disappeared; and months of torturing suspense passed over, the two lone women hearing nothing of his fate. They thought not of his selfishness in thus deserting them; they only pitied and loved him the more. Sir Thomas Crumpton was indignant in the extreme at young Desmond's conduct, and took this opportunity of 'washing his hands' of his poor connections. At length a letter came from the truant, and with trembling hands and streaming eyes the sister and aunt thankfully received it. Desmond was in India; he had worked his way thither on shipboard, and his prospects were brightening, after intense suffering and privation. Another letter, and another, each more hopeful and cheering than the last: Desmond was in the high road to fame and fortune, and in a few years would return to them a rich nabob! Fond dreams—illusive anticipations! The letters ceased, they heard no more, and for twenty-three years these patient souls had existed on hope. 'Desmond must be still alive.' No tidings could they gather of his death in those distant regions; still he would return to them, wealthy and powerful—for what were twenty-three years after all? Clarissa was still a girl to Aunt Paffz, and the baroness lived on memories of past happiness. Changes went on around them, but there was no change in them. A room was kept in constant readiness for Desmond's return, but the moth and decay will make themselves heard; and how fervently they wished for means to redecorate that chamber. The same idea had struck them both, though it was a long while ere they found courage to communicate it to each other—the idea of imitating the example of their neighbours, and putting up a bill signifying that part of their house was to let. The Baroness Paffz was the landlady, Sir Thomas Crumpton was their relative, and select and aristocratic must be the inmates they received! The emolument arising from this proceeding was to be entirely

devoted to the reparation and embellishment of Desmond's chamber—Desmond, the anxiously and daily looked for!

Clarissa still warbles the songs which Desmond admired when he was a boy, for he will like to hear them again, she says; she wears the headdress in which *then*, he proudly said, his pretty darling sister looked still prettier. Each knock at the door causes her to dart to the window and peep through the blinds to ascertain who it is; and often she says to Aunt Paffz, that she *almost* trusts their boy may not come just at this juncture, as he mightn't like to see the ticket up, and she would like to have his room fresh and nicely done up for him.

Poor things! my heart throbs in sympathy as I listen to their oft-repeated anticipations, for we are great friends, and I often refresh myself by going to see these out-of-the-world women. In their case, hope deferred has not made the heart sick—not unhealthy, or feverish, or even impatient. They are inured to waiting; they literally feed on hope; and when it is withdrawn, they will speedily fade and wither doubtless. But will it ever be withdrawn? Will they not depart this life with the hope yet warm in their yearning hearts that Desmond and they are surely about to meet again? It has sustained and cheered them in adversity, and who would wish to destroy the innocent hallucination? It is not, indeed, impossible—such things have been heard of—and Desmond, after a twenty-three years' silence, may turn up! We have never regretted our labours of lodging-hunting, since they brought us into contact with these interesting old ladies; no other visitors penetrated so far as the retired street where they reside; and after a few weeks they decided on taking the modest card of 'apartments to let' from the casement, lest Desmond should return. When he does, we will promise to add a little supplement to this romance of real life; and, in the meantime, may we, under hopes deferred, prove as patient, faithful, and resigned!

THE PALACE AT WESTMINSTER.

'I CANNOT comprehend it,' exclaimed Monsieur Vieuxtemps, a French gentleman standing near the Crystal Palace on the 1st of May, as soon as the subsidence of the cheers which greeted the Queen permitted him to be heard. 'I am told—and I can readily believe it—that there are a million of human beings in and about this glorious park, and among them exiles, refugees, visitors of every nation and degree, and yet there are certainly not more than three or four hundred soldiers to be seen! Where shall I find the secret of this multitudinous homogeneity—this grave enthusiasm—this order without force—this freedom without licence—this antique, hearty, but unservice loyalty; where seek the *mot d'enigme* of this marvellous riddle?'

As I happened to be one of a small group thus indirectly addressed, I said: 'You must not forget, Monsieur Vieuxtemps, that there is a reverse side to this gay picture—profound shadows, but the gloomier for the brilliant lights with which they are contrasted. In yon vast, half-deserted city, which has poured forth this multitude of well-dressed holiday-makers, there are hundreds of wretched homes and pining hearts!—'

'Of course—of course,' broke in the impatient Frenchman; 'that must be the case, I imagine, in all competitive societies; and the only question appears to me to be—whether struggle, which is the life of a people, should, because of the frequent injustices which grow out of it, be exchanged for inert languor—moral death? But it was not of this I was either speaking or thinking.'

'You wish to know who built the Crystal Palace?'

'Nonsense,' rejoined M. Vieuxtemps, a little tartly.

'Everybody knows that Paxton designed, and Fox and Henderson erected it.'

'Technically correct; but who set the thing agoing, and now supports it? The multifarious potentate who really does everything in England; and if you have a mind to see him in his representative form, I shall be glad to introduce you.'

'Let me go with you, and be brought face to face, also, with your parliament,' interposed one of the group, Herr von Blunderblast, fresh from Faderland.

This was agreed to; the hour and place of meeting arranged; and we separated.

'It will be a splendid building, no doubt, when finished,' said M. Vieuxtemps, when at the appointed time we met in New Palace Yard. 'A fitter residence for monarchs than to echo the boisterous clamours of a turbulent democracy. The façade on the river side, which I have seen, is very beautiful, and, I am told, nine hundred feet in length.'

'Yes: the czar of all the Russias when here is said to have called the work "a dream in stone." It is certainly a splendidly-enriched edifice.'

'And the cost already incurred is, I understand, enormous,' said Herr von Blunderblast; 'nearly two millions and a half sterling—a fabulous sum to any but English apprehensions.'

'When one reflects upon the gorgeous character and costly decorations of the building, both within and without; that it stands upon a bed of concrete fifteen feet thick, and covers nine acres of ground; that one of its massive towers, the Victoria, will reach a height of three hundred and forty-six feet, the two others not much less; that the octagon court or central hall alone contains two hundred and fifty tons of stone, fashioned into one roof—surprise at the magnitude of the bill of costs vanishes at once.'

'I think the style of architecture,' observed M. Vieuxtemps, 'is badly chosen. The Gothic is very well adapted for a cathedral, for a temple dedicated to the solemnities of religion, but a secular palace should be erected after the sublime models of classical antiquity.'

'I am sorry to say I must agree with you. The edifice is certainly not only in a wrong style of art, but is invested with a frippery in the way of ornament that is very toy-like and unsatisfactory. However, never mind the outside. Let us walk on. Now, we are in Westminster Hall, deeply interesting from historical circumstances. But let us hasten through it. We are now near the object of our search. Yon new and as yet unfinished archway at the further end of the Hall will form a portion of the lobby and entrance to the new Houses of Parliament; those doors on our right lead, as the letters on them indicate, to the supreme courts of law and equity. It is right, in pursuance of the task I have undertaken, that we should glance through them, for there can be no question that to the high character of the presiding judges, their perfect independence of the crown, the firm and impartial manner in which justice—costly, it is true, but still justice—is administered by them, under the check of freely-challengeable juries—the great writs of *habeas corpus*, *mandamus*, *quo warranto*, prohibition, with which they are armed—have greatly aided to produce that feeling of entire security, of individual right, without which the vast industrial energies of this

country would never have reached their present development.'

'What odd costumes! The judges and counsel look like mediæval portraits just stepped out of their picture-frames.'

'Yes: this wig-and-gown costume always suggests a sensation of the ludicrous to strangers; but John Bull—a man half made up of habits, precedents, and traditions—is not one to discard a custom of antiquity merely because it may appear odd and out of place.'

'These high functionaries are doubtless of noble family and descent,' remarked Herr von Blunderblast sentimentally. 'The English aristocracy are well-known to monopolise all dignities.'

'Not certainly in our courts of justice. Almost all our legal dignitaries have risen from the middle classes. The law in this country is a laborious and exhausting profession, and men are seldom urged to the exertions it exacts save by the sharp spur of necessity. The chief-justice in this court—Lord Campbell, a peer of parliament—is a Scotch gentleman who owes the eminence to which he has attained entirely to his legal acumen, unconquerable industry, and vast general talent. It is but a few years since he boasted to his Scottish constituents that he was still "plain John Campbell." The chief-baron of this next court—the Exchequer of Pleas—is a relative of the General Pollock, a soldier of fortune, whose Indian exploits you may have heard of. On his right sits Baron Parke, perhaps the ablest legist this country can boast of. The Common Pleas need not detain us—it is but a reflex of the others; nor this Vice-Chancellor Bruce's court—unless it be to remark, *en passant*, how difficult it is to believe, in the presence of the courteous gentleman and distinguished judge who presides, that Chancery can be the hateful and ruinous thing it is.'

'Vraiment!' observed M. Vieuxtemps. 'The tearing claw of equity does appear to be concealed beneath a smooth and very beautiful exterior.'

'This is the Lord High Chancellor's Court. You observe the judge?'

'Yes: a square-headed, decisive-looking man—his cerebral organisation indicative of indomitable energy and keen analytical thought.'

'That is Lord High Chancellor Truro, who began life as an attorney. He is now at the head of the administration of the law in this country, and, after the princes of the blood-royal, the first subject in the realm.'

'That appears to justify,' said M. Vieuxtemps, 'a remark I read some time ago in a speech of the British prime minister, which puzzled me a good deal at the time. It was to the effect that in continental countries the aristocracy is the despair, but in England the hope of talent.'

'A catching sentence, my dear sir, but to be taken with reservations. Talent in this country, with the exception of forensic, parliamentary, or military talent, has slight chance, I believe, of the peerage. But here we are in Westminster Hall again, and it is now quite time we were on our way to the committee-rooms of parliament. They are completed; but the present temporary entrance is in Abingdon Street, nearly opposite Westminster Abbey gate. We can go through by this last door on the right of the Hall.'

We soon reached the small archway in Abingdon Street, strode along the wooden passage, and ascending the seemingly interminable stairs, at last reached the long and splendid corridor in which the committee-rooms of both Houses are situated. Many of the doors were labelled with the titles of the committees, all of the Commons House, sitting within.

'Who appoints these committees, and what are their functions?' asked Herr von Blunderblast.

'They consist of a varying number of members

nominated by the House, to inquire into and report upon the merits or demerits, technical and substantial, of private bills, which are usually passed or rejected according to their report; to decide upon petitions allegative of the undue return of members; and, in short, to inquire into and report upon all matters relative to the administration of the home, foreign, colonial, and financial affairs of the country which the House may choose to investigate. The House also deposes to them its own power of sending for "persons, papers, and records."

'Do you mean to say,' exclaimed Herr von Blunderblast, 'that these House of Commons Committees can compel ministers, diplomatists, field-marshal, generals, to attend and answer questions relative to the affairs and secrets of their departments?'

'Certainly I do. There was a committee last year sitting to examine into the administration of affairs at Ceylon, and they have published a large "blue book," containing the result of their inquiry. Another is now occupied in investigating the conduct which the government have pursued towards the Cape of Good Hope. But look at the labels on the doors. What do you read?'

'Law of Mortmain; Copyhold Enfranchisement Bill; County-rate Expenditure Bill; Law of Partnership; Customs; Ordnance Survey (Scotland); Great Central Gas Company— Why, all the affairs of the country appear to be regulated by this omnipotent House of Commons!'

'That is strictly the case. The business of the Commons has immensely increased of late years. One reason of this is, that in the Commons must originate all money bills—all bills levying rates upon the people for any purpose whatever; the Peers neither having the power to initiate or change such bills in the slightest degree; they must be either consented to or rejected *en bloc*. This practice necessarily results from the constitutional axiom, acquiesced in by the Lords after many struggles to avoid so great a surrender of practical power, that the Commons are the "granting," the Lords the "assenting" power. In 1671 the Commons passed a resolution that in them alone lay "the fundamental right" in the matter of taxes and supplies—"the measure and the time." There is no professional man who works harder during the session than an active member of the House of Commons.'

'What do they get for all this worry and work?' asked M. Vieuxtemps.

'Honour and distinction—nought else. The honour and distinction of writing M.P. after their names.'

'I shall never comprehend this money-grubbing, money-contemning, queen-shouting, freedom-loving people,' murmured Herr von Blunderblast, 'as long as I live—never!'

'This is No. 4 Committee-room. Let us go in; but mind you speak in whispers only when in presence of a fragment of the Honourable House.'

'Those everlasting horse-hair wigs again!' ejaculated M. Vieuxtemps.

'Those two gentlemen are counsel learned in the law, who appear for the supporters and opponents of the measure now under investigation.'

'What is the measure?'

'It is a private bill that has been petitioned for, and of no kind of interest. Let us rather go into this apartment, where a committee is sitting on a case of election bribery. You will perhaps be amused: the grief and shame belong to us alone.'

'Oh, *par exemple!*' exclaimed M. Vieuxtemps when, after about an hour's attendance in the crowded room, we once more stood in the corridor. 'But this is scandalous.'

'The practice of bribery is a foul blot upon our electoral system; but, except in the spread of education, I know not where an efficient remedy is to be found.'

'But the thing is childish and absurd. Here it is proved that needy electors receive a stipulated amount of gold from a person whose name is given; they are also seen swilling beer and spirits; they vote for a particular candidate; and yet the lawyers—the committee—declare that they have no idea, no legal idea, of where the money and the drink came from!'

'A very proper decision in the absence of legal proof.'

'But the overwhelming moral presumption!'

'We to the country which, in judicial investigations, discards the strict, inflexible rules of evidence, to be guided by overwhelming moral presumption! No instrument more potent than that, be assured, to let in the most tyrannous wrong and injustice. What, if such a rule obtained in these committees, would there be to prevent a candidate, certain of being defeated, from bribing, through an indifferent party, two or three electors to vote for his opponent, and thereby vitiate his election? But come, it is near four o'clock, and we had better take our places in the waiting-room to the Strangers' Gallery of the House of Commons.'

'How shall we obtain admittance?' asked M. Vieuxtemps.

'Some of the members we shall find about the library will give us orders. I have never found any difficulty in procuring one.'

'I begin, I think,' observed Herr von Blunderblast, as we retraced our steps towards Abingdon Street, 'to comprehend something of this antique picturesque monarchy we saw the other day, with its heralds, knights, peers, banners, and devices; and your matter-of-fact, prosaic, and, I have little doubt, effective modes of controlling or neutralising its ancient prerogatives and attributes. Our people, it is already clear to me, have studied only the husk and shell of your system, not its inner and vital life.'

'You continentals certainly labour under some strange fancies respecting our monarchical system. You take us up too literally. We are a curious mixture. Notwithstanding the vastness of popular will, the wearer of the crown, as a centre of authority and fountain of honour, has still immense influence, and in no instance has it been, perhaps, more signally and beneficially displayed than in beating down the vast amount of sinister objection that was raised against the proposed and now triumphant display in the Park. But here we are at the outer door leading to the temporary Commons' House.'

The orders of admission were easily obtained, and we ascended the half-dozen steps on the left of the passage to the Commons, and took our seats in the waiting-room. 'Always,' said I, 'take this seat on the right, just at the head of the stair. The police of the House will only permit us to proceed to the gallery in the order in which we sit, commencing with me. We are therefore sure of a front seat, and the gallery altogether will only hold about sixty.'

'What is that painted on the door yonder?' asked M. Vieuxtemps, who was rather near-sighted.

'Members' Smoking-room: no Strangers Admitted.'

'Ah, then, the Honourable House does smoke. Hello! What's that—tinkle, tinkle? What does the bell mean?'

'That the Speaker has entered the House, and his chaplain commenced reading prayers.'

'There it goes again! What may it now betoken?'

'That prayers are over. If a House is made, the gallery will be immediately opened.'

'What do you mean by making a House?'

'If there be forty members present, the House will be constituted; if less than that number, it will be *ipso facto* adjourned. But we are called—it is all right.'

'What a shabbily-fitted House!' said Herr von Blunderblast as soon as we were seated—with its

plain straight rows of benches just rising one above the other, worn green leathern seat-cushions, and wooden galleries supported by rude square posts!

'These are fittings erected since the fire, which you no doubt heard or read of; and as the new House will soon be completed, it has not been thought worth while to incur any great expense for a merely temporary purpose. The two long side-galleries are members' galleries. That at the farther end, behind and above the Speaker's chair, is assigned to the reporters for the press.'

'Then that gentleman with the great wig on, seated in the porch or chair, with the royal arms over it, is Mr Speaker?'

'Yes; and the gowned and wigged gentlemen sitting just before him at the table are principal clerks of the House.'

'On the table I perceive lies the mace which Cromwell bade his soldiers take away.'

'True. The House is getting full. There are in all 656 members, since the borough of Sudbury was disfranchised: 498 for England and Wales; 53 for Scotland; and 105 for Ireland. But it is rare that anything like the entire complement are present. The Ministerial side of the House is on the Speaker's right—the Opposition on his left; but there is much confusion in this respect just now, on account of the number of independent sections of parties into which the House is divided.'

'What are those two red boxes on the table opposite each other for?'

'They are placed there for the reception of papers necessary to the ministry and the leader of the Opposition. The first lord of the treasury, Lord John Russell'—

'Which is Lord John Russell?' broke in M. Vieuxtemps with vivacity—'that short, slight-made gentleman, with his hat pulled over his eyes, or nearly so, and with his legs crossed and arms folded?'

'Yes; and Sir George Grey, much taller, but not with a more intellectual face, is on this side of the noble lord. On the same form or seat there now happen to be sitting the secretary of state for Foreign Affairs, the chancellor of the Exchequer, and the first lord of the Admiralty. Over against them, and directly in front of the other red box, sits in what appears to be a profoundly meditative posture—the honourable member for Buckinghamshire, who'—

'Ah!' exclaimed M. Vieuxtemps, his dim historical recollections suddenly bursting forth—'John Hampden!'

'No—no—no, my good friend!' I said, hastening to correct so strange an anachronism amidst the suppressed titters of the persons around us; 'not John Hampden, but a very accomplished and brilliant debater, and now the recognised leader of Opposition—Mr D'Israeli.'

'Who is the gentleman standing behind one of the small green baize tables placed crossways on the floor, about a fourth of the way up the House?'

'Those tables on each side the gangway mark the bar of the House. The member speaking is reading a report to the House of one of the committees. They are always read there, and so are messages from the Queen when brought down by a minister.'

'But where is the tribune?' asked M. Vieuxtemps—

'I do not see it.'

'There is none; the members speak from their places, merely taking off their hats when they rise; and if more than one rises at once, whoever is named by the Speaker, proceeds. The formality and fuss of a tribune would never answer in a House where there is such a mass of briefly-reported but important business-speaking going on in the early part of the sittings.'

'Who is that gentleman with the dress-sword at his

side, just coming down the House?' asked Herr von Blunderblast. 'I saw that, like all the others, he bowed slightly on passing the Chair.'

'That is the sergeant-at-arms of the House of Commons. Armed with the Speaker's warrant, he arrests members or others accused of breach of privilege—holds them in custody, or conveys them, as may happen, to Newgate or the Tower. He can obtain any amount of force necessary for the execution of the orders of the House.'

'That is a formidable power in the hands of a popular assembly.'

'It is a necessary power, without which the functions of the House, as the grand inquisition of the realm, could not be carried on.'

'I observe,' said Herr von Blunderblast, 'that many members have a number of rolls of papers in their hands. What may they be—their speeches?'

'No—petitions, which they will in a few minutes present to the House, in the order in which the Speaker calls their names.'

'One gentleman with a very white head, on the right hand, about half-a-dozen seats above the bar, has a barrow-load of them.'

'He is one of the members for the city of Dublin, and Ireland takes a great antagonistic interest in the chief question for debate this evening.'

'What are they doing or saying?' whispered Herr von Blunderblast after a few minutes' silence. 'One of the clerks at the table hands document after document to the Speaker, who says something—then writes something on it, and returns it to the clerk. I cannot make out what he says except perpetual "ayes" and "noes," amidst the buzz of the House. The members are conversing with each other—not attending to the Speaker.'

'The business now going on is merely of a routine character. The documents handed to the Speaker are private bills essentially decided upon by the committees to which they were referred. They are merely now passing through *pro forma* stages. That last was a railway extension bill. The Speaker read its title, and then said in a breath: "The motion is that this bill do now pass those that are for it say ay against it no the ayes have it." He then writes, as you saw, the decision on the bills, and returns it to the clerk.'

'Yes; but those everlasting ayes and noes only come from the Speaker's lips. Nobody else says ay, and nobody else says no: how, then, can the ayes have it?'

'It is, as I told you, a matter chiefly of form. Did any member object, he would rise, state his objection; there would be a discussion, and perhaps a division. These bills, therefore, are really passing without a dissenting voice. But, see, they begin to present petitions. The member states the place from whence the petition comes, the purport of its prayer, and about the number of signatures attached; he then, as you see, walks up and places it on the table. Sometimes, on his motion, the prayer is read at length by the clerk.'

'Look, that centre clerk is pitching them all under the table at his feet as fast as they arrive,' cried Herr von Blunderblast in much too loud a tone, though fortunately unheard by the gallery official.

'He is cramming them into a large, dark-coloured bag,' I answered. 'See, here comes an officer of the House with one already full.'

'What, then, in the name of common sense, can be the use of petitioning? Nobody is listening: it is all buzz—buzz; and the petitions, placed one moment on the table, are the next crammed into a huge bag and carried out of the House!'

'They are referred to the Petitions' Committee, by whom the substance of the prayer, and the number of petitioners, are recorded and printed, with the votes

and proceedings, for the use and information of the members.'

'What is that cross-firing now going on?' asked M. Vieuxtemps.

'Members putting questions of which they have given notice to the chiefs of departments, and the replies of the ministers.'

'Wh-e-e-e-w!' whistled Herr von Blunderblast, but fortunately not too loud. 'Then a ship-chandler who has contrived to get into parliament may badger and worry the first lord of the Admiralty, as that tall member yonder is doing now?'

'No doubt of it. Any M.P. is an exceedingly important personage; and this is one of the reasons the office, though unattended with a farthing of remuneration, is so eagerly sought after. Fancy the swelling importance, the immense delight of Mr Dobbs, who has by industry and integrity amassed a fortune, and obtained the suffrages of his fellow-townsmen, but is still perhaps at first rather shyed by the local aristocracy, finding himself questioning lords, snubbing right honourables, and possibly reading in the county paper a leader commencing thus: "The important information elicited, or rather, we should say, forcibly wrung, from the noble lord at the head of the Treasury by our talented and esteemed member, John Dobbs, Esq."'

'Hallo!' interrupted Herr von Blunderblast, 'the Speaker has left the chair, and they are hiding the mace away under the table!'

'It has been moved and carried that the Speaker leave the chair, in order that the House should go into committee. When that is the case the mace is removed, and the House in committee sit under the presidency of a chairman: in this instance Mr Bernal, who has taken his place, you perceive, at the table, by the clerks.'

'What is the *rationale* of this curious proceeding?' asked M. Vieuxtemps.

'This: all public bills, except those relating to taxation or spirituals, which must be grounded upon a previous resolution of the whole House in committee, pass, if successful, through the following stages:—Leave is given to introduce the bill, and it is read a first time; after an interval of an indefinite number of days, it is read a second time; another delay occurs; and then, as to-night, the House goes into committee on the bill, with a view to its examination, clause by clause, line by line, word by word. In committee, a member may speak upon one question as often as he chooses; when the Speaker is in the chair, only once. When the business of the committee is terminated, it is moved that the chairman report progress, and ask leave to sit again; which, if carried, has the effect of bringing the Speaker back to the chair. The House then resumes, as it is called; the mace is replaced on the table; and the business of the assembly goes on as before.'

'Those thundering "hears!" they are the "cheers" which I have seen marked in the journals,' observed M. Vieuxtemps. 'How stirring they are; and what a roar at times sweeps over the House!'

'Yes; an animated debate in the Commons is an exciting affair. Men who can take an effective part in these combats of giants seldom quit the arena unless compelled to do so. Do you mark how fine, how true, how ready the collective ear of the House is? The slightest trip, especially of an ambitious rhetorician, and what an instant explosion of derisive shouts! Dulness the House is often patient of, but inflation, vanity, conceit—never! It is a slippery and difficult floor to stand firm and erect upon, and requires very peculiar powers. Gentlemen, and there are a few, who speak well-reasoned, philosophic pamphlets, are the bores, the pests of the House. They cannot be laughed down, and the only remedy is to let them talk

to empty benches. That which best succeeds is the conventional, but bitter personality—the polite, subdued virulence, which strikes the antagonist rather than his argument. There! It was nothing but a brilliant sarcasm, but with what effect it flashed across the House, awakening as it passed an explosion of exulting or indignant echoes!

We remained silent for some time—the debate lulled, or rather was continued by less effective speakers, and presently Herr von Blunderblast nudged me sharply on the side. 'How's this?' he said; 'we seem to have just caught that white-headed old gentleman's eye, and he is ordering all strangers to withdraw.'

'The House is about to divide, and we must be off!'

Out we went—and the first out, foremost now, were ranged in due order for re-entrance by another door.

'What did they put us out for?' said Herr von Blunderblast, who was somewhat ruffled.

'The fact is, my good sir, we were not supposed to be there at all! No stranger has any right to be present during the deliberations of parliament.'

'Were they, then, not really members who gave us the orders?'

'Certainly they were; but the Speaker, in accordance with one of our numerous conventional fictions, is supposed not to be aware of the presence of strangers in the Honourable House; and should any member call his attention to the fact, they are at once ordered to withdraw.'

'What an utterly ridiculous absurdity this appears to be!' said M. Vieuxtemps.

'Appearance in this case, as in many others, is deceitful. The custom, absurd as it may appear, has its uses. The late Mr O'Connell, by its means, easily defeated a conspiracy on the part of the reporters to burke his speeches. He had them all regularly turned out every evening the House sat; and as the purchasers of newspapers must have the parliamentary reports, the gentlemen of the press were obliged to give in. There is another apparent absurdity and contradiction: a gallery is set apart for reporters, and yet it is a breach of privilege, punishable by imprisonment, to publish the debates. This seeming absurdity has also its uses. The understanding of course is, that the proceedings shall be fairly reported; that no one shall be libelled or ridiculed by the pretended report of a speech. Should such an offence be committed, the printer of the newspaper, as the law now stands, may be summoned to the bar of the House, and summarily punished, technically for publishing the debates, but really for the libel or slander. Were it otherwise, the Honourable House would have to pursue the offender in a court of law, to the manifest loss of its dignity and prestige.'

'I shall never comprehend it!' murmured Herr von Blunderblast once more. 'Never!'

We were soon in, and soon out again. Again we returned, and presently were again excluded.

'What is the meaning of all this?' exclaimed Herr von Blunderblast, who was getting very hot and furious.

'The minority—about forty to four hundred—will not permit the bill under discussion to be further proceeded with to-night; and are moving adjournment after adjournment.'

'Then why, in the name of common sense, do not the majority put an end to such obstruction?'

'To be sure!' exclaimed M. Vieuxtemps. 'Why do they not vote *la clôture*—the close of the discussion, or speech-making?'

'Simply because the majority have no power to do so; and God forbid they ever should have! Nothing more deplorably evinces the utter want of comprehension on the part of continental nations who have copied the externals of our representative system, than

that precious *clôture* of theirs; a mode whereby a majority, not satisfied with outvoting their opponents, of enacting laws to which the people represented by the minority decidedly object, gag them into the bargain. M. Guizot, the year before last, gave his valuable opinion, before a committee of the House appointed to consider whether any means could be adopted of shortening the debates, grounding himself of course upon the great constitutional experience of France, that *la clôture* was a sufficient and quite unobjectionable remedy; whereas anything more dangerous, more likely to damage irretrievably the representative form of government, could scarcely be devised. It would not at all events do here. There is a tradition that John Lambton—Black Jack, as he was familiarly called in the north, afterwards Earl Durham—once moved that "fresh candles be brought in," as an amendment upon an obnoxious measure which the ministry of the day were endeavouring to hurry through the House—of course only the more emphatically to mark his determination that the matter should not be so hurried.'

'According to your doctrine,' rejoined M. Vieuxtemps, 'a minority might defeat any and every measure to which they objected.'

'Just as the Commons might upset all government by refusing the necessary supplies, the Lords refuse to pass any bill sent up to them, the Queen veto every measure concurred in by the two Houses. These extreme rights exist; and a government of legislative compromise—the safest of all modes of progress—is the consequence. The practical result of the right of the minorities in both Houses is to insure ample discussion; and you may be sure of this, that nothing is more politic than to allow a beaten party to have their full say. But, *allons!* it is useless to re-enter the gallery merely to be turned out again, and we had better be jogging homewards.'

'It is a piece of many-coloured patchwork this governmental system of yours,' said Herr von Blunderblast as we emerged into the street, 'which I can comprehend, though dimly as yet, may practically answer much better than more surface-perfect schemes. But you have not explained how the army—after all, the true force—is to be effectually controlled by speeches, votes, bits of parchment.'

'Oh, the Honourable House has a charming contrivance for that purpose: the Bill of Rights declares that standing armies in time of peace are illegal.'

'Illegal! Why, your standing army numbers upwards of one hundred thousand men!'

'Just so; because every session there originates in the Commons what is called the Mutiny Bill, which, first reciting the unquestionable illegality, enacts that, for various reasons, the crown may, for one year only from that date, levy, maintain, and martially govern regular troops. That act not renewed, the soldiers might walk off to their homes; the corporal, harshly dealt with, if so minded, might knock down his captain with impunity; and the entire army, in fact, would fall at once and utterly to pieces.'

'Then the Mutiny Bill is necessary indeed!'

'It is so; but you have yet much to learn. To-morrow, remember, we visit the Lords.'

'A picturesque and magnificent edifice,' said Herr von Blunderblast, looking, as we shook hands, at the new palace, but thinking, I could see, much more of its inner life than its exterior aspect; 'and yet many of the people who have erected and still maintain it deny that it possesses either beauty or excellence.'

'That is true; but it is not the Victoria Tower, nor the flowering capitals, nor the carved vaultings, which any of my countrymen in their heart of hearts object to: they are merely of opinion that the clustering columns which support the building should have more shafts. They may be right or wrong; but at all events

the shafts, to be either safe or useful, should be in some degree prepared and fitted for the purpose. Good-by!

THE BEAR-STEAK.

A GASTRONOMIC ADVENTURE.

THE Englishman's predilection for a beefsteak is almost proverbial, but we fancy it would take some time to reconcile John Bull in general to a bear-steak, however much we might expatiate to him on its excellence and the superiority of its flavour over that of his old-established favourite, however confidently we might assure him that the bear was a most delicate feeder, selecting the juiciest fruits of the forest and the most esculent roots of the earth for his ordinary nourishment. It might be supposed that this dislike to bear's flesh as an article of food arose from our national aversion to everything that is outlandish; but the following gastronomic adventure, related in the pages of a modern French traveller, proves that our frog-eating neighbours find it just as difficult to surmount their aversion to feeding on the flesh of Master Bruin as the most sturdy and thoroughbred Englishman among us.

M. Alexandre Dumas, after a long mountainous walk, arrived about four o'clock one fine autumn afternoon at the inn at Martigny. Exercise and the keen mountain air had combined to sharpen his appetite, and he inquired from the host, with some degree of eagerness, at what hour the *table-d'hôte* dinner was usually served.

'At half-past five,' replied the host.

'That will do very well,' rejoined M. Dumas; 'I shall then have time to visit the old castle before dinner.'

Punctual to the appointed hour the traveller returned, but found to his dismay that every seat at the long table was already occupied. The host, however, who appeared to have taken M. Dumas, even at first sight, into his especial favour, approached him with a courteous smile, and, pointing to a small side-table carefully laid out, said: 'Here, sir, this is your place. I had not enough of bear-steak left to supply the whole *table-d'hôte* with it; and, besides, most of my guests have tasted this bear already, so I reserved my last steak for you: I was sure you would like it.' So saying, the good-natured host placed in the centre of the table a fine, juicy-looking steak, smoking hot, and very tempting in appearance; but glad would the hungry traveller have been could he only have believed that it was a beef, and not a bear-steak, which now lay before him. Visions of the miserable-looking animals he had seen drowsily slumbering away existence in a menagerie, or covered with mud, and led about by a chain, for the amusement of the multitude, presented themselves to the traveller's eyes, and he would fain have turned away from the proffered treat. But he could not find it in his heart to be so ungracious as to express a dislike to food which the host evidently considered as the choicest delicacy the country could afford. He accordingly took his seat at the table, and cut off a small slice of the steak; then screwing his courage to the sticking-point, and opening his mouth wide, as if about to demolish a bolus, he heroically gulped the dreaded morsel. *Ce n'est que le premier pas qui coûte.* He had no sooner achieved this feat than he began to think that bear-flesh was, after all, not quite so bad a thing as he had expected. He swallowed a second morsel. 'It was really the tenderest and most juicy steak he had ever tasted.' 'Are you sure this is a bear-steak?' he inquired of the landlord.

'Yes, sir, I can assure you it is,' replied the good-natured bustling man as he hurried off to attend upon his other guests at the *table-d'hôte*. Before he returned to M. Dumas at the side-table, three-quarters of the steak had disappeared; and, highly gratified at finding

his favourite dish was so much approved of, he renewed the conversation by observing: 'That was a famous beast I can tell you; it weighed three hundred and twenty pounds.'

'A fine fellow indeed he must have been,' rejoined the traveller.

'It cost no small trouble to kill him.'

'I can well believe that,' rejoined M. Dumas, at the same time raising the last morsel to his mouth.

'He devoured half the huntsman who shot him!' added the loquacious landlord.

Hastily flinging aside the loathed morsel which he had just placed within his lips, the traveller indignantly exclaimed: 'How dare you pass such jokes upon a man when he is in the middle of his dinner?'

'I can assure you, sir, I am not joking,' replied the landlord: 'I am only telling you the simple truth.'

The traveller, whose appetite for further food of any description whatever was by this time effectually destroyed, rose from table, and with a look of horror, begged that the host would acquaint him with the particulars of the tragedy which had now acquired in his eyes so painful an interest. The good man, nothing loth to hear himself talk, yielded a ready acquiescence to this request, and continued his story as follows:—

You must know, sir, the man who killed this bear was a poor peasant belonging to the village of Fouly, and named William Mona. This animal, of which there now only remains the small morsel you have left upon your plate, used to come every night and steal his pears, giving a special preference to the fruit of one fine pear-tree laden with bergamottes. Now it so happened that William Mona unfortunately also preferred the bergamottes to all other fruit. He at first imagined that it was some of the children of the village who committed these depredations in his orchard, and having consequently loaded his gun with powder only, he placed himself in ambush that he might give them a good fright. Towards eleven o'clock at night he heard a distant growl. 'Ho, ho!' said he, 'there is a bear somewhere in the neighbourhood.' Ten minutes afterwards a second growl was heard; but this time it was so loud and so near at hand that he began to fear he should scarcely have time to reach a place of refuge, and threw himself flat upon the ground, in the earnest hope that the bear would be satisfied with taking his pears instead of devouring himself. A few moments of anxious suspense ensued, during which the bear, passing within ten paces of the terrified peasant, advanced in a straight line towards the pear-tree in question. He climbed it with the utmost agility, although its branches creaked beneath the weight of his ponderous body; and having secured for himself a comfortable position, committed no small havoc among the luscious bergamottes. Having gorged himself to his heart's content, he slowly descended from the tree, and returned in tranquil dignity towards his mountain home. All this had occupied about an hour, during which, time had appeared to travel at a much slower pace with the man than it did with the bear.

William Mona was, however, at heart a brave and resolute man, and he said to himself, as he watched his enemy's retiring steps: 'He may go home this time, if he pleases, but, Master Bruin, we shall meet again.' The next day one of his neighbours, who came to visit him, found him sawing up the teeth of a pitchfork, and transforming them into slugs.

'What are you about there?' he asked.

'I am amusing myself,' replied William. The neighbour, taking up one of the pieces of iron, turned it over and over in his hand, like a man who understood such things, and then said quietly:

'If you were to own the truth, William, you would acknowledge that these little scraps of iron are destined to pierce a tougher skin than that of the chamois.'

'Perhaps they may,' replied William.

'You know that I am an honest fellow,' resumed Francis (for so was the neighbour called): 'well, if you choose, we will divide the bear between us; two men in such a case are better than one.'

'That's as it may be,' replied William, at the same time cutting his third slug.

'I'll tell you what,' continued Francis, 'I will leave you in full possession of the skin, and we will only share the flesh between us, together with the bounty offered by government for every bear that is killed, and which will give us forty francs a piece.'

'I should prefer having the whole myself,' replied William.

'But you cannot prevent me from seeking the bear's track in the mountain, and placing myself in ambush on his passage.'

'You are free to do that, if you please.' So saying, William, who had now completed the manufacture of his slugs, began to measure out a charge of powder double in amount to that usually placed in a carbine.

'I see you intend to use your musket?' said Francis.

'Yes, of course I do; three iron slugs will do their work more surely than a leaden bullet.'

'They will spoil the skin.'

'Never mind that, if they do their work more effectually.'

'And when do you intend to commence your chase?'

'I will tell you that to-morrow.'

'Once more, then—are you quite determined not to let me share the chance with you?'

'Yes; I prefer managing the whole matter myself, and sharing neither the danger nor the profit—*chacun pour soi*.'

'Farewell, then, neighbour—I wish you success.'

In the evening, as Francis was passing Mona's dwelling, he saw the huntsman quietly seated on the bench before his door, engaged in smoking his pipe. He once more approached him and said:

'See, I bear you no ill-will—I have discovered the bear's track, therefore I might lie in wait for him and shoot him, if I pleased, without your help; but I have come once more to you, to propose that we should attack him together.'

'Each one for himself,' replied William, as before.

Francis knew nothing of Mona's proceedings during the remainder of that evening, except that his wife saw him take up his musket at about half-past ten o'clock, roll up a bag of gray sackcloth, place it under his arm, and leave the house. She did not venture to ask him what he was about; for Mona, in such cases, was apt to tell her to hold her tongue, and not trouble herself about matters which did not concern her.

Francis had really in the meantime tracked the bear, as he had said he would. He had followed its traces as far as the border of William's orchard, and, not liking to trespass upon his neighbour's territory, he then took up his post on the borders of the pine-wood which lay on the slope of the hill overhanging Mona's garden.

As it was a clear night, he could observe with ease from this spot all that was going on below. He saw the huntsman leave his house, and advance towards a gray rock, which had rolled down from the adjoining heights into the centre of his little enclosure, and now stood at the distance of about twenty paces from his favourite pear-tree. There Mona paused, looked round as if to ascertain that he was quite alone, unrolled his sack, and slipped into it, only allowing his head and his two arms to emerge above the opening. Having thus in a great measure concealed his person, he leaned back against the rock, and remained so perfectly still that even his neighbour, although he knew him to be there, could not distinguish him from the lifeless stone. A quarter of an hour thus elapsed in patient expectation. At last a distant growl was heard, and in less than five minutes afterwards the

bear appeared in sight. But whether by accident, or whether it were that he had scented the second huntsman, he did not on this occasion follow his usual track, but diverging towards the right, escaped falling into the ambush which Francis had prepared for him.

William in the meantime did not stir an inch. It might have been imagined that he did not even see the savage animal for which he was lying in wait, and which seemed to brave him by passing so closely within the reach of his gun. The bear, on his side, appeared quite unconscious of an enemy's presence, and advanced with rapid strides towards the tree. But at the moment when he rose upon his hind legs, in order to clasp the trunk with his fore-paws, thus leaving his breast exposed, and no longer protected by his broad and massive shoulders, a bright flash of light illuminated the face of the rock, and the whole valley re-echoed with the report of the doubly-loaded gun, together with the loud howl which proceeded from the wounded animal. The bear fled from the fatal spot, passing once more within ten paces of William without perceiving him. The latter had now taken the additional precaution of drawing the sack over his head, and rested motionless as before against the face of the rock.

Francis, with his musket in his hand, stood beneath the shelter of the wood, a silent and breathless spectator of the scene. He is a bold huntsman, but he owned to me that he fairly wished himself at home when he saw the enormous animal, furious from its wound, bearing straight down upon the spot where he stood. He made the sign of the cross (for our hunters, sir, are pious men), commended his soul to God, and looked to see that his gun was well loaded. Already was the bear within a few paces of the pine-wood; in two minutes more a deadly encounter must take place, in which Francis was well aware that either he or the bear must fall, when suddenly the wounded animal paused, raised his nostrils in the air, as if catching some scent which was borne by the breeze, and then uttering one furious growl, he turned hastily round, and rushed back towards the orchard.

'Take care of yourself, William—take care!' exclaimed Francis, at the same time darting forward in pursuit of the bear, and forgetting everything else in his anxiety to save his old comrade from the terrible danger which threatened him; for he knew well that if William had not had time to reload his gun, it was all over with him—the bear had evidently scented him. But suddenly a fearful cry—a cry of human terror and human agony—rent the air: it seemed as though he who uttered it had concentrated every energy in that one wild, despairing cry—an appeal to God and man—'Help! oh, help, help!' A dead silence ensued: not even a single moan was heard to succeed that cry of anguish. Francis flew down the slope with redoubled speed, and as he approached the rock, he began yet more clearly to distinguish the huge animal, which had hitherto been half-concealed beneath its shade, and perceived that the bear was trampling under foot, and rending to pieces, the prostrate form of his unfortunate assailant.

Francis was now close at hand; but the bear, still intent upon his prey, did not even seem aware of his presence. He did not venture to fire, for terror and dismay had unnerved his arm, and he feared that he might miss his aim, and perhaps shoot his unhappy friend, if indeed he yet continued to breathe. He took up a stone and threw it at the bear. The infuriated animal turned immediately upon this new and unexpected foe, and raising himself upon his hind legs, prepared to give him that formidable hug, which the experienced huntsman well knew would prove a *last embrace*. Paralysed with fear, his presence of mind had wellnigh deserted him, when all of a sudden he became conscious that the animal was pressing the point of his

gun with its shaggy breast. Mechanically almost he placed his finger upon the lock, and pulled the trigger. The bear fell backwards—the ball had this time done its work effectually. It had pierced through his breast, and shattered the spinal bone. The huntsman, leaving the expiring animal upon the ground, now hastened to his comrade's side. But, alas! it was too late for human assistance to be of any avail. The unfortunate man was so completely mutilated, that it would have been impossible even to recognise his form. With a sickening heart, Francis hastened to call for help; for he could perceive by the lights which were glancing in the cottage windows that the unwonted noise had roused many of the villagers from their slumbers.

Before many moments had elapsed, almost all the inhabitants of the village were assembled in poor Mona's orchard, and his wife among the rest. I need not describe the dismal scene. A collection was made for the poor widow through the whole valley of the Rhone, and a sum of seven hundred francs was thus raised. Francis insisted upon her receiving the government bounty, and sold the flesh and the skin of the bear for her benefit. In short, all her neighbours united to assist her to the utmost of their power. We innkeepers also agreed to open a subscription-list at our respective houses, in case any travellers should wish to contribute a trifle; and in case you, sir, should be disposed to put down your name for a small sum, I should take it as a great favour.

'Most assuredly,' replied M. Dumas, as he rose from the table, and cast a parting glance of horror at the last morsel of the bear-steak, inwardly vowing never again to make experiments in gastronomy.

WEOVIL BISCUIT MANUFACTORY.

A YEAR or TWO ago we gave a short account of the celebrated biscuit manufactory of Mr Carr at Carlisle, where machinery of an ingenious kind was made to do wonders in the way of turning out vast quantities of small fancy biscuits, which formerly were made only by hand. We have now the satisfaction of presenting a notice of the not very dissimilar process of biscuit-baking pursued at Weovil, in the south of England; a place known by public report through the frequent visits of Her Majesty in passing to and from Osborne House.

At Weovil are produced biscuits for the royal navy, and there, as at Carlisle, the motive power is a large steam-engine, whose agency is visible in all parts of the establishment. The services of this engine commence with the arrival of a cargo of wheat under the walls of the building; and we should have a very imperfect notion of the ingenuity displayed in the establishment if we did not examine some of the earlier processes. Let us, then, begin with the beginning; and having observed that the wheat is lifted by a steam-worked crane from the lighter to the uppermost floor, let us descend to the floor below, and examine the first process to which it is submitted—that of cleaning. The grain supplied from above flows in a continual stream into one end of a cylinder of fine wirework, about two feet in diameter and ten in length, which revolves steadily in a horizontal position. A spiral plate runs through the interior of this cylinder, dividing it into several sections, and thus forming a sort of Archimedean screw. The revolutions of this cylinder carry the grain onwards through its whole length, so that in the passage any particles of dirt that may have been mixed with it fall through the interstices of the wirework. The effectual character of this operation is exemplified by the quantities

of dirt deposited from wheat which to all appearance was clean before entering the cylinder; the grain thus thoroughly cleansed, descends another stage to the grinding-room (for the wheat is ground on the premises), where ten pairs of millstones are worked by the same steam-power. There is nothing peculiar in the process of grinding; but the manner in which the flour is afterwards collected deserves notice. As it flows from the several stones, it is led into horizontal troughs, along which it is propelled by the action of perpetual screws working in each trough. The contents of all the troughs are brought to one point, whence, by means of a succession of plates or buckets revolving round a wheel on the principle of a chain-pump or dredging-machine, the flour is lifted to the storey above, where it is cooled, sifted, and put into sacks, for removal to the bakehouse. It is not long since we observed in a newspaper the announcement of an invention for collecting and saving the impalpable powder which flies off in the process of grinding corn, and which, containing the purest portions of the flour, has hitherto been wasted. This saving has not yet been effected at Weovil, as our whitened appearance on leaving the mill-room sufficiently testified; but, doubtless, the zeal and ingenuity that has introduced the improvements we are describing will not stop short while anything remains to be done.

We now arrive at the bakehouse, the principal theatre of Mr Grant's ingenuity. We are in a large room on the ground floor—it may be one hundred and twenty feet in length, lofty, and well lighted, the centre portions of which are occupied by machinery of no very complex aspect; and it may be a dozen men and boys, slipshod and barearmed, are moving here and there amongst it. There is no bustle, no confusion; and notwithstanding the unceasing movements of the machinery, very little noise. We are at once sensible that we are witnessing a scene of well-organized industry; but we can hardly persuade ourselves that we see the whole staff employed in converting flour into biscuit at the rate of one hundred sacks per day. In the midst of the general activity, the eye is caught by the figure of one man whose attitude of repose contrasts strangely with the movements going on all round him. He seems to have nothing to do but to lean listlessly with one or both of his elbows on the top of a sort of box or chest, much resembling an ordinary stable corn-bin, which stands against the wall at the left of the entrance; yet that occupation will not account for the mealy state of his bare arms: let us look into the bin, and see if we can discover anything. The bottom of it is filled with water, just above the surface of which, extending from end to end, we see a circular shaft armed with iron blades, crossing it at intervals of two inches apart, and protruding six inches or more on each side of the axle, at right angles with it, and with each other. In one corner of the bin is the mouth of a pipe, which, even whilst we look, discharges an avalanche of flour into the water; at the same moment some invisible power causes the shaft to revolve—slowly at first, that the light dust may not entirely blind us; then, as the flour becomes more and more saturated with water, rapidly and more rapidly, until the whole is thoroughly mixed up together; and in the space of four and a half minutes, one hundredweight of flour is converted into dough. The revolutions of the shaft now cease, and our hitherto inactive friend proceeds to transfer the contents of the bin to a board placed to receive them, in masses

resembling in shape Brobdignag pieces of pulled bread. Again, we see that the surface which a moment since was free from mark or indentation, is now scored all over in hexagonal figures. The lower side of the plate, in fact, consists of a bed of sharp-edged punches of hexagonal form, reminding us in appearance of a gigantic honeycomb, which at one blow divides the dough into single biscuits, leaving no superfluous material except the trifling inequalities of the outer edges. Twenty-four whole biscuits, with a due complement of halves, are cut out at one stroke, each of which is at the same time impressed with the broad arrow of Her Most Gracious Majesty. We now see why the old circular form of the biscuit has given way to the hexagonal. The latter shape manifestly economises labour in the manufacture and space in stowage, while it is hardly more liable than the former to waste by breakage. When it is borne in mind that before the introduction of this machinery every single biscuit was separately kneaded, shaped, and stamped by hand, the extent to which the productive powers of the establishment have been increased may be imagined.

We have now arrived at the last stage of the process, and must for a time lose sight of the biscuits; but we will accompany them to the mouth of the oven. A range of nine ovens occupies one side of the building, but only four of them are ordinarily in use. We are informed that one man attends to two ovens. We notice that the fires by which they are heated are continually burning in one corner of them, even while the baking goes on; so that as soon as one batch of biscuits is withdrawn, the floor is ready for another. A light frame, on which are deposited the trays of biscuits as they issue from the stamp-office, is wheeled up to the oven: the trays are transferred by the baker to the mouth, and thence, by means of a long pole armed with a hook, pushed to the farthest recesses of the oven, where they are carefully ranged side by side, to the number of twelve, when the cargo is complete, and the door is shut upon them. Formerly it was the work of two men to charge the oven; one wielded the peel, which the other supplied with single biscuits; and we have watched with much amusement the unerring accuracy with which constant practice had enabled the latter to hit the mark from a distance of several feet. The new mode is perhaps more prosaic: but not only is the saving of labour great, but it is easy to conceive that the action of the heat can be regulated with more uniformity under it than under the tedious system of introducing and removing the biscuits singly. In fourteen minutes the baking is completed; and thus, in twenty-eight minutes from its first admixture with water, we have a sack of flour weighing one hundred-weight converted into the like weight of biscuits, fit for immediate consumption. A subsequent exposure of two or three days to the high temperature of a room over the ovens, is all that is required to render them fit for packing and storing. We have stated that at present four only out of nine ovens are in use; and the hours of working are from 7.30 A.M. to 2 P.M. Even this limited amount of work is more than sufficient to keep up the requisite supply of bread for the navy; and it is frequently found necessary to stop on alternate days, to prevent the stores accumulating beyond what is desirable. If the whole force of the establishment were set in motion, it would easily, our guide informs us, supply 10,000 men with half a pound of meal and half a pound of biscuit per day. The quality also of the bread is improved, by the uniformity with which all the processes of making it are conducted under the operation of the machinery.

We do not know whether the apparatus we have been describing is in use in any other establishment: probably it is. There seems no reason why it should not be brought into general operation. Though few, if any bakeries can have to supply so large a demand as

that of the Royal Navy, there must be many of sufficient extent to make it worth while saving labour at the cost of the machinery; and though at Weovil it is only applied to making biscuit, the principle of it would seem applicable to the manufacture of any kind of bread. The great labour of the baker is in kneading. The process that effectually kneads flour and water would work equally well if other ingredients were mixed with those primary elements. Due regard being had to the rights of the inventor, we would wish to see his machinery widely employed in private as well as public establishments. It might prove a powerful ally in the cause of cheap bread. It might also be worth the consideration of brickmakers whether the machinery here described might not be advantageously applied to the purposes of their business. There seems a sufficient similarity in the two processes to render such an application of it very practicable. We trust that Mr Grant, the ingenious inventor of this machinery, has received from the authorities some substantial acknowledgment of his valuable labours.

Our object has been to describe the process of making biscuit, as carried on at Weovil. There are many other objects of interest in that establishment, but this is the chief. An inspection of the whole, however, will well repay the curious visitor, and will satisfy him that whatever ground there may be for charging the administrators of our national means of offence and defence with ignorance, imbecility, and extravagance, in the important branch of the commissariat at least neither economy nor efficiency has been neglected.

JHELLABORE.

A PERUSAL of the adventures of Moran Shillelah in a recent number of the Journal has recalled to my Old Indian mind certain reminiscences of a creature who, although in many respects unlike the Irish idiot, closely resembled him in one point; namely, in the devoted and reciprocal attachment between himself and his teacher and protector. As he used to be an object of sympathy in his own town and neighbourhood, a short account of him may perhaps not be uninteresting to a British reader, although the residence of my poor hero was a far distant land.

Chinsurah, situated on the right bank of the Hoogly, and close by the ancient town of the same name, was once the seat of Eastern riches and grandeur; and at the time of which I speak there still existed many remains of decayed wealth and reduced Mogul aristocracy. But with this we have nothing to do, except in so far as Jhellabore* (so the poor maniac was generally styled) was of Mogul descent; but who his parents were, or what their station in life was, I never then thought of inquiring; nor do I recollect that I ever heard his real name; and indeed, although he used to be an object of almost daily sympathy and consideration, I could never have suspected that after the lapse of so many years his image would remain so strongly impressed on my aged brain.

All I knew of Jhellabore was, that he was an orphan, and that he had been placed by his father in charge of a respectable moollah,† who kept a school, and with whom he resided when I first knew him. The moollah had many scholars, but none like Jhellabore: for a Mogul he was fair, and really a beautiful boy, with hazel eyes and curly locks, and slender and delicately made almost to effeminacy. He soon learned to read Hindostanee and Persian; and throwing away his primer and childish stories, he took to studying the beautiful and enthusiastic poets of the East. His man-

* Signifies decked out. † Braw' is perhaps nearer the meaning.

† Priest. These priests are kept by rich men to read the Koran daily in their family, and in case of sickness and trouble, at their bed-sides.

ter, who had the same taste, gave him every encouragement. Jhellabore divided his time between reading his favourite books and strolling in a neighbouring flower-garden. He might constantly be seen among the gorgeous and strong-scented plants of his sunny clime, reposing in arbours of chemelleis and belas, or tending the Persian rose or rich white ghonderaj (the king of odours), till the moon shone out in her silvery splendour; and oft would he stand as if transfixed, gazing on the spangled sky, and chanting sonorous and impassioned verses from Hafiz or Saadi.

Doubtless, the impassioned youth's ardent admiration of poetry and flowers, combined with his zeal as a scholar, occasioned his aberration of mind. His imagination was nurtured at the expense of his other faculties. He read and felt till he conjured up aerial visions, the most vivid of which seems to have been a female form of heavenly birth—a houri, with whom he was in love. He became, in short, an Oriental nympholept. At last, when his reason was completely undermined, and he could no longer study—he was then about eighteen years of age—he used to wander about in his favourite garden, clean and tastefully arrayed, with his beautiful black hair hanging in ringlets. He never wore the Mohammedan dress, as he disliked long sleeves and thick clothing. His *dhotie** was of the most beautiful muslin, dyed of some fanciful hue, sometimes rose-colour, sometimes sky-blue, and a silver-edged handkerchief encircled his waist. Over his shoulders was thrown a scarf of the same materials, and dyed to harmonise with his dhotie. In all this, notwithstanding the unbinged state of his mind, he continued to shew much taste and refinement. The garlands of flowers round his neck and upon his breast were too numerous to be counted, but they were never faded or soiled. A yellow champaha flower stuck behind his ear contrasted well with his black locks, and a bouquet of roses or a punka† of *belu* buds was in his hand; and a pair of neat buff-leather slippers completed his picturesque dress. He seldom walked out alone in the evenings, but had generally some young gay Mogul companions with him. With these he would enter into conversation, but would occasionally come to a stand-still, and exclaim, with eyes fixed on the heavens, 'Beautiful, rosy-lipped enchantress!—goddess of indescribable loveliness!—I greet thee!' 'Whom do you see?' was sometimes asked. 'It is my Peri—my beloved—ask no more!' was the answer.

The moollah seemed to have regarded the orphan not only as a pupil but as an adopted child, and they had become strongly attached to each other. His death was deeply felt by Jhellabore, and was probably unmixed with selfish regrets, though by this event he was left without support. But Jhellabore was a general favourite, and his young friends took care to supply him with finery, flowers, and a little money; so his days glided on as before, and he never thought of tomorrow. The patron of the deceased moollah had no doubt been an opulent man. The little dwelling and schoolroom had been his gift to the teacher, and after his death they seemed to have become the property of Jhellabore, for there he continued to abide. Adjoining there was also an old-looking tomb—that of the patron, surrounded by a light open-worked trellis-wall, such as may be seen in white marble around the tomb of Momtaza, in the Taj Mahal at Agra. Within the enclosure was a vacant space for another grave, and here the moollah was also buried, and a similar tomb built over him; and so, united in death, the rich and the poor, the protector and the protected, rested together near the scene of their earthly labours.

After the burial-ground had been neatly finished and

decorated, a divan and carpet were placed in it by some charitable hand. Upon these Jhellabore rested when weary, and there, three times a day, he read the Koran, and performed his devotions; and this, notwithstanding his derangement, he could do with propriety and solemnity. The former proprietor of the ground might have rested disregarded and forgotten but for Jhellabore the maniac. There, for his sake, many a passer-by stopped to see the marks of his devoted love to his earthly benefactors and his God.

Many a copper coin was cast, many handfuls of cowries were scattered upon the two whitewashed graves, along with wreaths of sweet-scented flowers, while heaps of little horses* of baked clay lay piled up in one corner. Often have I and my dear old father contributed our adhelah, or half rupee, at the *sainted* shrine (for such it had now almost become), and marvelled how good frequently accrued from evil; for in all this the Christian could not but trace the finger of God, whatever might be thought of it by the Moslem or Hindoo. As darkness came on, Jhellabore lit his gay-coloured lanterns of talc and gilt paper; and at the head of his master's grave, under the hollow pillar surmounted by a turban, always blazed a cherang or lamp, with sweet-scented oil, while *loddin* or frankincense exhaled its odours around it, and there, during the warm season, Jhellabore would fall asleep.

What became of Jhellabore eventually I know not. Perhaps he was of too ardent and excitable a temperament to be long for this earth. I left the place, and other objects occupied my mind, yet the recollection of the youthful enthusiast is still fresh in my memory.

Before I take my leave of Jhellabore, I may remark that his countrymen—many of whom are superstitious and illiterate—scribed his insanity to the influence of supernatural beings. His wanderings among the flowers at eve was pronounced bad, very bad! Every plant and almost every flower in the East has a mythic or romantic tale attached to it, or belongs to some genius or deity. And to pluck flowers, or even to touch plants and trees at dusk, when all the good and evil spirits are supposed to be abroad, is always forbidden, especially to the young and beautiful.

MEMS FOR MUSICAL MISSES.

SIT in a simple, graceful, unconstrained posture. Never turn up the eyes, or swing about the body: the expression you mean to give, if not heard and felt, will never be understood by those foolish motions which are rarely resorted to but by those who do not really feel what they play. Brilliance is a natural gift, but great execution may be acquired: let it be always distinct, and however loud you wish to be, never thump. *Practise* in private music far more difficult than that you play in general society, and aim more at pleasing than astonishing. Never bore people with ugly music merely because it is the work of some famous composer, and do not let the pieces you perform before people not professedly scientific be too long. If you mean to play at all, do so at once when requested: those who require much pressing are generally more severely criticised than others who good-humouredly and unaffectedly try to amuse the company by being promptly obliging. Never carry books about with you unasked; learn by heart a variety of different kinds of music to please all tastes. Be above the vulgar folly of pretending that you cannot play for dancing; for it proves only that if not disobliging, you are stupid. The chief rule in performing this species of music is to be strictly accurate as to time, loud enough to be heard amid the noise of the dancers' feet, and always

* Dhotie—a piece of cloth without seam, about 10½ feet long and 6 feet broad.

† Fan.

* These horses may be seen near every mosque or shrine where a Moslem mendicant takes up his abode. They are typical of the Borak, Mohammed's charger, and of the holy horse on which the faithful are to ascend to heaven at the day of judgment.

particularly distinct—*marking* the time: the more expression you give, the more life and spirit, the better will your performance be liked: good dancers cannot dance to bad music. In waltzes the first note in the bass of every bar must be strongly accented. In quadrilles the playing, like the dancing, must be gliding. In reels and strathspeys the bass must *never* be running—always octaves—struck with a strong staccato touch; and beware of playing too quick. In performing simple airs, which very few people can do fit to be listened to, study the *style* of the different nations to which the tunes belong. Let any little grace be clearly and neatly executed, which is never done brilliantly or well by indifferent performers of a higher style of merit. Make proper pauses; and although you must be strictly accurate as to time, generally speaking, it should sometimes be relaxed to favour the expression of Irish and Scotch airs. Beware of being too sudden and abrupt in your *nationalities*—caricaturing them, as it were—which ignorant and sometimes indeed scientific performers often do, totally spoiling by those ‘quips and cranks’ what would otherwise be pleasing, and which sounds also to those who really understand the matter very ridiculous. Do not *alter* national airs: play them simply, but as *full* as you please, and vary the bass. In duets, communicate your several ideas of the proper expression to your fellow-performer, so that you may play into one another’s hands—give and take, if I may so express myself; and should a mistake occur, do not pursue your own track, leaving your unfortunate companion in difficulties which will soon involve yourself; but cover it as well as you can, and the generality of listeners will perhaps never discover that one was made, whilst the more sapient few will give you the credit you deserve.

As regards singing, practise two or three times a day, but at first not longer than ten minutes at a time, and let one of these times be before breakfast. Exercise the extremities of the voice, but do not dwell long upon those notes you touch with difficulty. Open the mouth at all times; in the higher notes especially, open it to the ears as if smiling. Never dwell upon consonants. Be distinct from one note to another, yet carry them on glidingly. Never sing with the slightest cold or sore throat. Vocalise always upon A, and be careful to put no B’s before it. Never take breath audibly. Begin to shake *slowly* and steadily. Practise most where the *voce di petto* and the *voce di gola* join, so as to attain the art of making the one glide imperceptibly into the other. The greatest sin a singer can commit is to sing out of tune. Be clear, but not shrill; deep, but not coarse.

When you intend to sing, read the words, and see that you understand them, so as to give the proper expression. Let all your words be heard: it is a great and a common fault in English singers to be indistinct. Study flexibility. Practise both higher, louder, and lower than you sing in public; and when practising, open the mouth wider than it would be graceful to do in company. Do not change the sound of the letters; sing as like speaking as you can. It is better to sing *quite plain* than to make too many turns and trills: these, when attempted at all, should be executed very neatly. Study simplicity: it is better to give no expression than false expression. Never appear to sing with effort or grimace; avoid affectation and every peculiarity. Never sit when you sing, if you can possibly help it, but stand *upright*. Give more strength in ascending than in descending. Do not suffer yourself to be persuaded to sing soon after eating. Accidental sharps ought to be sung with more emphasis than accidental flats. The Italian vowels *a* and *i* have always the same sound, but *e* has two different ones: the first like the *ai* in *pain*; the other like *ea* in *tear, wear, or swear*. *O* has also two sounds:

one like *o* in *tone*; the other like the *au* in *gaudy*. Articulate strongly your *double* consonants when singing French or Italian. The voice is said to be at its best at eight-and-twenty, and to begin to decline soon after forty, when the more you strain and try to reach the higher notes that are beginning to fail you, the quicker you hasten the decay of your powers. Children should never be allowed to sing much or to strain their voices: fifteen or sixteen is soon enough to begin to practise constantly and steadily the two extremities of the voice; before that age, the middle notes only should be dwelt upon, or you run the risk of *cracking*, as it is termed, the tones. Never force the voice in damp weather, or when in the least degree unwell: many often sing out of tune at these times who do so at no other. Take nothing to clear the voice but a glass of cold water; and always avoid pastry, rich cream, coffee, and cake, when you intend to sing.

A SOLITARY KINGDOM.

On Sunday morning, the 9th December 1849, at three A.M., we made the island of St Paul’s, the southernmost of those twin rocks which frown in solitary grandeur in the midst of the Indian Ocean. The order was given to get the pinnace out, and away we went, steering for a conspicuous sugar-loaf rock, some 150 feet in height, which marked the entrance of the harbour, or, more properly, the lagoon.

After pulling for about half an hour, we reached the entrance of the harbour, where we descried a flagstaff displaying French colours, and several wooden houses, the residence of the owner of the island and his crew. Having volunteered to act as interpreter, I felt rather ‘unfrocked’ at hearing a loud hail, in capital English, ‘Boat ahoy!’—keep well in with the shore, and come up to yonder wharf!—instructions which we followed implicitly, and soon jumped on to the dry land. We were received by three or four ugly-looking Madagascar negroes, who led us up to ‘the captain,’ whom we discovered surrounded with his lieutenants and people, apparently in grave deliberation. There was no mistaking his Gallic face, and I forthwith addressed him in French, stating the name of our ship and her destination, and requesting a supply of vegetables and poultry. He immediately invited us, with a certain rough *empressment*, into his house, and offered us breakfast, composed of Dutch cheese, potatoes, cold fowl, biscuit, and bad rum. The calls of hunger being satisfied, and a cursory inspection of the premises duly accomplished, we sallied out to explore the dominions of our new friend.

The island of St Paul’s (for whose correct latitude and longitude I beg to refer to Horsburg) is merely the crater of an extinct volcano, extending ten miles in length and four or five in breadth. The crater now forms a circular lagoon, enclosed by steep and rocky walls from 800 to 700 feet in height, covered with a stunted vegetation of scrub, fern, and coarse grass. It is rarely visited by shipping, though lying directly in the track of vessels bound to Australia and the South-Sea fisheries. I did not learn how it first happened to be occupied; probably some freebooting adventurer was attracted thither by its merits as a fishing station. The lagoon forms a safe and commodious harbour for small craft, the bar at its entrance being covered at flood tide with ten or twelve feet of water. The present owner is a Frenchman, who had long been engaged in the trade between the Mauritius and Bourbon and the Cape of Good Hope; but having got into some trouble with the revenue officers, fled to the island in a small schooner of about sixty tons, manned by Madagascar slaves; and finding it occupied by a Pole named Mieroslawski (a brother of the Hungarian hero), he bought it of him for the sum of 2000 dollars; and forth-

with hoisting the tricolor, set up a petty sovereignty under the protection of his native flag. Here he instituted a system of rigid discipline, by means of which he contrived to keep the command of his wild followers, and train them to regular work. His ability and energy enabled him to conquer the natural difficulties of his new abode, and he now derives a handsome money income from the produce of his fisheries, making three or four voyages annually to Bourbon or Port Louis, where his old scores had been effaced by the hand of time.

The French Revolution of 1848 brought some change in his calculations, inasmuch as his black slaves all became free, and he is now fain to hire, at stated wages (which, however, are moderate enough), the labour of those poor devils, who were his property before. I was surprised to see no women on the island; and inquiring of him how it came to pass, he told me he had brought some with him at first, but they were the cause of so much quarrelling, that he had found it impracticable to govern his kingdom so long as they were in it, and he therefore shipped them back to the place whence they came. The inhabitants of the Rock consisted therefore of himself and two mates, two other Frenchmen, a half-caste boy, and fourteen Nossibé blacks—the ugliest looking negroes I ever beheld. They seemed to lead a not unpleasant life, with plenty to eat and little to do—the luxuries of the island being biscuit and tobacco, which they cannot always procure. Cows, goats, and rabbits roam about the rocks; and the cheerful cackling of hundreds of fowls forms a homely feature in the otherwise wild and rugged ensemble.—*Abridged from 'The Empire,' a new Sydney journal.*

KEAN AND GARRICK.

Edmund Kean was a great favourite of Mrs Garrick, the widow of the celebrated actor. Whenever it was desirable that a new performer at Drury Lane should make a hit, the committee used to bring the venerable old lady out to her private box, to say he reminded her of David. She said so, and this went the round of the papers accordingly. In the case of Kean she spoke honestly. He did remind her of her husband, and was nearer to him by many degrees than any actor she had ever seen, although both agreed he could not play Abel Drucker. Once in conversation he complained to her that the papers made terrible mistakes as to his conceptions of character, readings, points, and other peculiarities. 'These people,' said he, 'don't understand their business; they give me credit where I make no effort to deserve it, and they pass over the passages on which I have bestowed the utmost care and attention. They think because my style is new and appears natural that I don't study, and talk about the sudden impulse of genius. There is no such thing as impulsive acting; all is studied beforehand. A man may act better or worse on a particular night from particular circumstances, but the conception is the same. I have done all these things a thousand times in country theatres, and perhaps better, before I was recognised as a great London actor, and have been loudly applauded; but the sound never reached as far as London.' 'You should write your own criticisms,' replied the old lady; 'David always did so!'

A HINDOO FAMILY.

It often happens, especially when there is a little property in a family, that what we would call a dozen families live together, and are esteemed by the Hindoos as one. We once knew a family of this kind which consisted of about sixty members. There was the old man, the patriarch of the family, his four sons and their wives, and ever so many grandchildren of both sexes. All these lived in one house, and had one purse and one table. One of the old man's sons was in government employ; another was a monehee, and taught English gentlemen the native languages; the eldest, as the

father could not then attend to business, was steward of the family, made all the purchases, and received the earnings of the other branches of the family; another son was a hanger-on without employment. The grandchildren of the male sex were either writing gratis as candidates in government offices, or at school, or at home, according to their respective ages. Several of the eldest of these again were also married, and had their wives with them. Many such families as this are to be found still among the Hindoos, where European intercourse has not disturbed the natural course of native society.—*Indian Paper.*

'I AM WEARY—TAKE ME HOME.'

THE pageant was imposing, and the gay assembled throngs,
With plaudits loud and rapturous, rewarded siren songs;
The players donn'd their regal robes as mimic kings and queens—
Ah! gold is oft to tinsel changed when view'd behind the scenes!
I knew there was one sadden'd heart which made an inward moan,
In all that goodly companie—for that heart was my own.

A chord was touch'd—a nerve was thrill'd—yet 'twas no dulcet strain,
Awoke the spell old strains can weave—wild memories of pain;
But 'twas because a little child, a fondled child, was nigh,
That recollection wander'd back to scenes and days gone by;
Supported by a mother's arm, to rest her drooping head—
'I am weary—take me home,' the engaging prattler said.

No longer that gay scene I saw—the song I heard no more—
For I was bounding merrily across a greensward floor;
And angel forms that flew away in young life's happy hours,
Disported with me once again all garlanded with flowers:
But when the lambs were in the fold, when gloaming hour had come,
The whisper came as surely—'I am weary—take me home.'

The vision changed—I stood within a dear familiar room;
'Twas darkened, and I long essayed to penetrate the gloom:
With silent awe I recognised a white-robed suffering saint
Waning towards eternity, with scarce a mortal taint;
She spoke with patient sweetness (surely angels waft such sighs)—
'I am weary—take me home'—then on earth she closed her eyes.

I gaze upon the stage of life—I know its tinsel glare,
Its hollowness and falsity, its promises so fair.
Its scenes of misery I view with sympathising heart,
Yet in its bright illusions never more to play a part.
Life's day is short—I rouse from sleep—for gloaming hour doth come,
When the pleading prayer ascends—'I am weary—take me home.'

C. A. M. W.

FRUITS.

Fruits are more acid in the morning than in the evening, because the sun's rays decompose their carbonic acid, and make them part with their oxygen, of which they do not gain a fresh supply until night.

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